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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused October 15 news coverage on Taiwan government's decision to cut individuals' income tax; on the confession of Yeh Sheng-mao, former Director of the Ministry of Justice's Investigation Bureau (MJIB), regarding the probe of the former first family's alleged money-laundering; and on the United States government's decision to inject US\$250 billion to buy shares in banks. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" criticized the Bush administration's North Korea policy as a failure as it let North Korea become a member of the nuclear club. End summary.

"A Nuclear Game"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (10/15):

"The United States eventually removed North Korea from the list of countries which support terrorism. [United States President George W] Bush eventually got out of the embarrassing situation and left the mess of the Korean peninsula to his successor. North Korea's Kim Jong-il fooled the United States with his astute negotiation strategies and eventually forced the White House to have a showdown. His [Kim's] status of national hero in people's minds was thus further consolidated. ...

"North Korea's cooperation with Iran and Syria is the most serious issue in the anti-nuclear proliferation effort. However, the United States signing a nuclear cooperation deal with India recently created a hypocritical double standard, which made it difficult for the United States to speak righteously and sternly to North Korea.

"In fact, naming Iran and North Korea as countries in the axis of evil was one of Bush's major diplomacy mistakes. Labeling North Korea as [a country] supporting terrorism was problematic in itself.

"Now, after making herculean efforts, [the United States] took the initiative and docilely removed the label for North Korea. However, during the whole process North Korea has joined the nuclear club. [The United States'] efforts were all in vain.

"Making one mistake caused mistakes in every subsequent step. Bush's anti-terrorism efforts pushed him into a corner and left him besieged on all sides. [Circumstances in] Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq have been difficult to wrap up. Kim allowing the United States to escape an embarrassing situation barely allowed Bush to retain a little bit of his legacy in diplomacy, but really brought the nuclear game into full play."

WANG